

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

.. The Consent of the Governed

From the time of its creation, Provo Valley has been a favored area. Set high in the peaks of the rugged Rocky Mountains, the valley seemed destined to be the home of a chosen people.

The settlers who moved into this country were motivated by deeply religious principles, and were governed in their lives by righteous motives. Because they had been schooled in principles of righteousness, they were able to govern themselves accordingly. This made civil government practically unnecessary, and the leadership provided through the Church adequately filled the needs of civil and spiritual guidance.

The settlements along Snake Creek in Provo Valley's western region began in 1859, and by 1862 one of the first settlers, Sidney H. Epperson, was appointed to serve as the presiding elder. In this position he exercised all the government direction necessary.

Eventually two settlements sprang up along Snake Creek. Elder Epperson was called as presiding elder in the Upper Settlement and David Van Wagonen was named as the lower settlement's presiding officer.

These men, who were individuals of strong leadership, continued in their presiding positions until 1866 when the Black Hawk Indian War threatened the area and the upper and lower settlements joined to form the new community of Midway.

During the threat of Indian war Elder Epperson also assumed the duties of military leader. After the Black Hawk War was ended, the people of Midway strengthened their community ties by building permanent homes in the townsite. Elder Epperson continued as the presiding elder until 1870 when he was succeeded by Henry S. Alexander. David Van Wagonen served again after Elder Alexander and then when the Midway Ward of the Church was formed John Watkins was called as Bishop and by virtue of his position became the community leader.

Midway's years under Bishop Watkins were years of steady improvement and expansion. Progress was made in laying out streets and building irrigation systems. The Midway Irrigation Company was formally organized on February 18, 1888.

New converts to the Church began to settle in Midway, many of them coming from Switzerland. This saw a fusing of different nationalities, but the common love of the Gospel, their common goal of liberty and love of freedom enabled the people to work together harmoniously. From this experience developed patriotic, loyal American citizens.

In 1873 a Tithing Office was built in the community of pot rock which was abundant in the area. This was used for English speaking meetings, and by 1875 a German Hall had been constructed to accommodate the German-speaking Swiss. All the sermons, as well as the ordinances and the by-laws of the community and the irrigation company were translated into German.

By 1891 the community had grown large enough that it was difficult for one man to carry both the Church and the civic responsibilities of leadership. So on June 1, 1891 Midway was incorporated as a town and on August 1, 1891, Alvah J. Alexander was elected as the first town board president. By January 23, 1892 Mr. Alexander and other elected officials had extended the boundaries of the community to the present proportions.

At first there were no Town Hall or community offices so the officials met to transact their business in stores or private homes. Many of these meetings were held in George Bonner's store, the German Hall or in Godfried F. Buehler's store.

In 1898 James B. Wilson succeeded Mr. Alexander. Those elected to serve on his board included Henry T. Coleman, John Morton, George Bonner and Godfried Buehler.

Mr. Wilson and his board, consisting of George Bonner Jr., Fredrick Haueter, Attewall Wootton Jr. and Andreas Burgener were confronted with the serious problem of contagious disease in 1900.

Records show that on April 20, 1900 the board met with Doctors John W. Aird and Wm. Russell Wherritt to discuss the contagious fever that was sweeping through the town. Mr. Bonner and Mr. Wilson were appointed as a board of health and authorized to negotiate with the doctors in controlling any contagious disease that came into the community. This was probably the first attempt to quarantine those with serious diseases.

This same board also went on record in a meeting held December 21, 1900 as unanimously opposing smallpox vaccinations, even though it was a state law.

The community prospered under Mr. Wilson's leadership and on August 20, 1901, the town was in such good financial condition that the board voted not to collect the taxes which they had levied the previous June.

Mr. Wilson was elected to another term in January of 1902, with his new board consisting of Henry T. Coleman, Fredrick Haueter, Attewall Wootton Jr. and Godfried Buehler. George A. Huntington was appointed justice of the peace.

This new board again faced serious disease problems with the outbreak of diphtheria and smallpox epidemics that swept through the entire community. A complete quarantine was imposed and no one under 16 years of age was allowed to meet or gather in groups. The quarantine